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ABSTRACT

Because of the critical role that student teaching plays in teacher education programs, cooperating teachers should be adequately prepared to provide the best possible models for their student teachers. An effective cooperating teacher training program is research based, integrates theory with practical application, and provides cooperating teachers with the expertise needed to supervise student teachers. The Professional Awareness for Cooperating Teachers (PACT) program is the result of a collaborative effort between Wilkes University (Pennsylvania) and regional school districts to develop a program that identifies and conveys a body of knowledge and set of skills which can be implemented to improve the cooperating teachers' work with student teachers. PACT is a three-credit, tuition-free, graduate level course offered to practicing elementary and secondary teachers. The course content is based on the seven components of the PACT model: reflection, expectations, organization, observation, communication, observation, supervision, and evaluation. (IAH)

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Professional Awareness for Cooperating Teachers

Introduction

Student teaching is usually identified by new teachers as the most rewarding and useful aspect of their preservice professional preparation (Griffin *et al.*, 1983; Nemser, 1983). The extreme importance of this experience in the preparation of teachers has long been recognized, and the role of the cooperating teacher in leading, guiding, and supervising student teachers can be characterized as integral to the teaching profession and the educational system.

Research indicates that despite the importance of the student teaching experience, cooperating teachers traditionally learn little about how to work with adults rather than with children, or about what preservice programs expect of them other than the provision of opportunities for student teachers to practice (Neufeld, Exley, and Jorgensen, 1988). Only rarely are cooperating teachers genuinely educated for their role as supervisor (Thies-Sprinthall, 1984). Although most cooperating teachers are committed to their supervisory responsibilities, they receive little or no preparation or training and do not have the expertise to effectively supervise student teachers.

Research also indicates that many student teachers receive scant feedback from their cooperating teachers regarding their instructional skills (Copas, 1984). Goodman (1985) contended that lack of cooperating teacher inservicing is one of the reasons that "student teachers have little opportunity to reflect upon their teaching experiences or experiment with curriculum or instructional strategies" (p. 46). If the student teaching experience is to remain an integral component of the teacher education program, it is essential that cooperating teachers have the knowledge and skills necessary to work effectively with student teachers.

The Influence of the Cooperating Teacher

The research of Seperson and Joyce (1981) confirms the belief that the cooperating teacher is influential in affecting the teaching style of the student teacher. Most student teachers modeled the attitudes and behaviors of their cooperating teachers. For the most part, it was found that those student teachers placed with cooperating teachers who maintained positive attitudes adopted more positive attitudes themselves. The student teachers who were placed with cooperating teachers maintaining negative attitudes became more negative.

The influence of cooperating teachers has been observed in the teaching methods employed by student teachers. Student teachers working with cooperating teachers who provided them with complex cognitive and social tasks followed those models, while the student teachers working with cooperating teachers who relied heavily on the recitation model used that method. Joyce (1988) commented on the profound influence the cooperating teacher has on the behavior of the student teacher:

> . . . the trend effects of student teaching are probably dictated by the placement process, resulting in what David Hunt termed a "funneling" of teaching styles rather than branching toward an expanded repertoire. A not unreasonable conclusion is that the persistence of recitation in teaching is a product of the field experience. In some informal investigations, evidence appeared that the conforming behavior of the teacher candidates was not simply a matter of predisposition or need. The few teacher candidates who failed to conform generally received poorer evaluations than those who closely followed the patterns of the cooperating teacher, regardless of the types of teaching behavior they displayed. The important findings from studies were not just those that provided confirmation of the opinion that the cooperating teacher is influential, but those that provided information about the developmental evolution of teaching styles and insight into the causes of some of the more disturbing aspects of that evolution (p. 33).

Beyer's study (cited in Bower and Van Dyke, 1988), has indicated that attitudes of student teachers and their cooperating teachers become more similar as they progress through their field experiences. It would seem logical that cooperating teachers should be prepared to be the most

effective role models possible for their student teachers.

Cooperating Teacher Training—A Collaborative Effort

There is ample evidence in the research suggesting the need for cooperating teacher training programs in order to present the essential responsibilities of the cooperating teacher and to identify methods through which the cooperating teacher can be most effective in carrying out these responsibilities. Cooperating teachers need to identify and implement these responsibilities to ensure their professional awareness as well as that of future teachers.

An effective cooperating teacher training program should be collaborative in nature. Morin and Lemlech (1987) asserted that meaningful collaborative efforts between teacher training institutions and cooperating school districts should include "training classes for the cooperating teachers to prepare them for their role as coach and to verify that they do indeed have the capacity to model a variety of instructional models" (p. 92). Morin and Lemlech further state:

> The improvement of teacher training programs is a joint responsibility of teacher education institutions and cooperating schools. Cooperative planning of appropriate professional experiences for student teachers and cooperating teachers needs to occur with both institutions sharing decision making. For example, a major function of the university supervisor should be to work with the cooperating teachers to help them prepare for their role as tutor-coach. Cooperating schools need to provide support for such an endeavor through released time or funds, equipment, or other material support (p. 92).

According to Neufeld *et al.* (1988) the "training should recognize and support individual differences among teacher preparation programs, and be based on research and established models. It should involve schools and teacher preparation programs in its development, and involve supervising professors as trainers and participants, and cooperating teachers as visiting lecturers" (p. 313). Therefore, an effective teacher education program should develop and incorporate, in collaboration with appropriate school districts, a comprehensive training program for cooperating

teachers that genuinely educates them for their role. An effective cooperating teacher training program is one that is research-based, integrates theory with practical application, and provides the necessary expertise for cooperating teachers to supervise student teachers.

The Wilkes University P.A.C.T. Program

The Professional Awareness for Cooperating Teachers (P.A.C.T.) Program has been in place since the fall semester of 1990 at Wilkes University, a comprehensive, independent institution of 2,200 undergraduate and 500 graduate students located in the historic district of Wilkes-Barre in the Pocono region of northeastern Pennsylvania. P.A.C.T. is a three-credit, tuition-free, graduate level course offered by the Wilkes University Education Department through an application process to professionals currently involved in classroom teaching at the elementary and secondary levels.

Professional Awareness for Cooperating Teachers represents a successful collaborative effort between educators from Wilkes University and regional school districts, who sponsor the University's student teachers. These two groups of educators are responsible for the design, facilitation, and evaluation of the course, which is offered each semester to a select group of eight teachers. Competition for admission to P.A.C.T. is keen. The applicants are requested to detail their educational and professional background and respond in written format to questions including: Why do you wish to take this course? What do you consider the greatest value to having a student teacher? Will you make a commitment now to sponsor a Wilkes University student teacher and to implement skills learned in this course? A P.A.C.T. selection committee, consisting of Education Department faculty in collaboration with administrators and teachers from regional school districts, reviews the applications and determines the participants.

P.A.C.T. is based on the premise that there is a body of knowledge and a set of skills that can be implemented to improve the cooperating teacher's work with student teachers. This

information is generated from research on teaching, learning, and supervision, in addition to teachers' knowledge and skills derived from practice. Professionals who participate in the innovative program make a commitment to sponsor a Wilkes University student teacher and to implement procedures and skills learned in the course.

Professional Awareness for Cooperating Teachers is a research-based course designed and implemented to meet Pennsylvania State Standards and to meet the distinct needs of those educators who serve or aspire to serve as cooperating teachers. The course is designed to identify the role of the cooperating teacher regarding the supervision of student teachers and to present a formal training program that includes leadership strategies for the effective interaction with student teachers as well as crucial techniques of communication, observation, supervision, and evaluation.

Components of the P.A.C.T. Model

As a result of research by Polachek (1991) regarding cooperating teachers, a seven-component P.A.C.T. Model was generated to serve as a guide for the content of the cooperating teacher training program. It is from this model that the course received its title. The model can provide a context for the competencies which should be included in a cooperating teacher training program designed to enhance the overall professional awareness and supervisory behaviors of cooperating teachers.

In the P.A.C.T. program, research-based findings are presented and analyzed for each of the seven components of the P.A.C.T. Model—reflection, expectations, organization, observation, communication, supervision, and evaluation. The following is a description of the components of the P.A.C.T. Model:

1. Reflection: The cooperating teacher needs to engage in serious introspection as part of preparing for the responsibility of working with a student teacher. The cooperating teacher

must ensure personal command of subject matter and techniques, identify personal teaching style, and reflect on the level of personal pride in the profession and in the experience and mastery brought to the profession. The cooperating teacher must also encourage such reflection on the part of the student teacher, as reflection is a catalyst for personal growth and development.

2. Expectations—Expectations come to the cooperating teacher from every direction. The cooperating teacher is accountable to the school district to maintain a balanced, well-organized, high quality program during the student teaching experience. The student teacher expects the cooperating teacher to provide a positive experience while serving as leader, mentor, role model, and evaluator. Role modeling skills should deal with the areas of: instruction; discipline; personal characteristics; and attitude toward and interaction with students, colleagues, and parents.

   The college or university expects the cooperating teacher to become familiar with the teacher education program including goals and competencies to be met by the student teacher, cooperating teacher, and university supervisor. It also expects the cooperating teacher to develop a knowledge base to help student teachers connect research and application. The cooperating teacher should exemplify professionalism by sharing authority, providing opportunities for creative freedom, and by maintaining a professional attitude. In reality, it is expected that the cooperating teacher awaken the expectations of the student teacher.

3. Organization—Thoughtful planning is integral to effective organization by the cooperating teacher. It includes preparation of student and school personnel for the arrival of the student teacher. It also includes the cooperating teacher as a classroom manager role model for the student teacher in the following areas: time management; classroom arrangement; expectations, rules, and procedures; management of student behavior; and organizing and

conducting instruction.

4. Observation—Observation is a continuous, participatory, diagnostic, and cooperative appraisal process directed toward professional growth. The results of observation provide the raw materials for conferencing, for the development of philosophies and strategies, and for the ultimate evaluation of the student teaching experience. The cooperating teacher must know how to watch perceptively with clearly defined objectives. The cooperating teacher must also provide the student teacher with opportunities for observation of quality teaching, techniques on how to observe, and the means to make sense of what has been observed.

5. Communication—Ongoing communication must be initiated and maintained by the cooperating teacher in order to provide a supportive and trusting atmosphere. Clear and open communication is essential for the implementation of successful conferences. Communication skills for the cooperating teacher include: techniques for the provision of suggestions, advice, constructive criticism, and positive feedback to student teachers; conference scheduling and planning; and the incorporation of personal experiences for the purpose of student teacher professional development.

6. Supervision—Since supervision provides cooperating teachers with teaching opportunities, they need to explore various models of supervision and master the specific research-based supervisory skills which guide them in the support and encouragement of student teachers throughout the experience. These supervisory skills should include: welcoming student teachers; induction of student teachers into the daily routine; provision of positive opportunities for student teacher observation of quality teaching; guidance with lesson plans, teaching materials, and actual presentations of lessons; observation techniques; and techniques regarding cooperating teacher availability and openness to student teachers.

7. Evaluation—Evaluation is a critical aspect of the student teaching experience, and the

cooperating teacher has the principal evaluative role. Evaluation in the student teaching situation is an essential means of communication that conveys the student teacher's progress. It increases awareness of goals and the processes useful for goal attainment. The cooperating teacher is expected to make formative and summative evaluations based on sound judgments about teaching quality in addition to appropriate specific recommendations for teaching improvement.

A natural extension of Professional Awareness for Cooperating Teachers began in the fall semester of 1991 when the graduates of this program began an experiment in the collaborative supervision of student teachers. At various elementary and secondary school sites in regional school districts, groups of two to four cooperating teachers formed teams that supervised a team of student teachers. The student teachers assigned to the team were the responsibility of all team members, and the team members were the primary supervisors of the student teachers. A Wilkes University Education Department faculty member was a member of the team, but did not have a role greater than any team member. Through this program, Wilkes is not only collaborating with classroom teachers, but is empowering those cooperating teachers by making them equal participants in teacher training efforts.

Conclusion

It is clear that cooperating teacher training programs form an essential component of the teacher education program (Wasserman, 1987; Driscoll and Strouse, 1988). The P.A.C.T. Model in place at Wilkes University serves as the basis for the implementation, ongoing development, and evaluation of the research-based cooperating teacher training program. For cooperating teachers, Professional Awareness for Cooperating Teachers means gaining expertise that will enhance the

effectiveness of teacher education. For student teachers, it means experiencing effective supervision leading to growth in their chosen profession. Finally, for the profession, it means a measure of accountability to the whole of society.

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